



# HIGH ROAD & DEMOCRACY SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS

2026





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# FELLOWSHIP INFORMATION

*Application Deadline: February 10, 2026*

## Program Basics

Fellows work June 1, 2026-July 31, 2026 earning a living wage for 300 hours (\$5000 total). Students are given a project/experience with their host organizations, working 7.5 hours per day, Monday through Thursday. Every Friday the students, as a group, are immersed in the city life of Buffalo with neighborhood walking tours, field trips, cultural experiences, and discussions with guest experts and civic leaders. Fridays are also forums for learning from each other by sharing weekly journals, project experiences, research and other accomplishments. There are specific skill-building opportunities and Fellows get to hear from High Road Alumni. Group housing arrangements are facilitated for those interested (fellows pay). A mandatory one credit pre-course will take place the second half of Spring 2026 with the following dates. **Please note in your application if you are unavailable any of the dates:**

- Saturday, March 21 10am-1pm and 1:30-4pm
- Wednesday, March 25 4:30-7pm
- Tuesday, April 15 4:30-7pm
- Wednesday, April 22 4:30-7pm

## Place

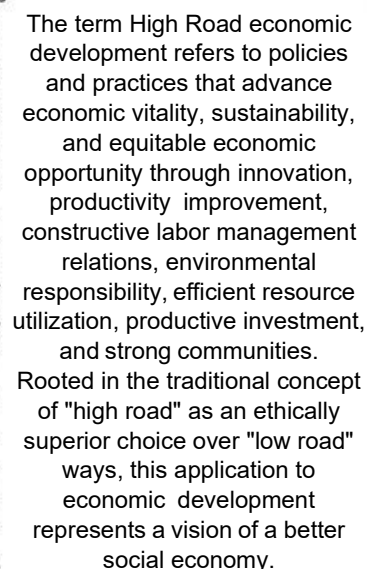
Cornell ILR's extension history begins with Buffalo. Since 1946, ILR has played a vital role in the region, working in partnership with businesses, unions, government, education and community organizations to build an economy that works for all. High Road Fellowships were launched in 2009 as a new way to connect students with practitioners who were driving change in the local economy. Undergoing dynamic reinvention, Buffalo is home to a rich array of creative community leaders and organizations tackling rust belt challenges.

## Community Partner

Each student is placed with a host organization affiliated with the Partnership for the Public Good, a civic organization made up of over 300 community partners promoting more equitable and sustainable economic development in Greater Buffalo. PPG produces action research and policy recommendations on pressing local, regional and state concerns. Students gain hands-on experiences working with organizations in the vital nonprofit sector of the economy where job creation, neighborhood revitalization, and the greening of the economy are everyday reality.

## Student Criteria

High Road Fellows are Cornell undergraduates interested in grassroots democracy and how individuals can help create a more equitable economy. It is a competitive application process. This year we are excited to invite and accept 2-4 Buffalo State University students.



The term High Road economic development refers to policies and practices that advance economic vitality, sustainability, and equitable economic opportunity through innovation, productivity improvement, constructive labor management relations, environmental responsibility, efficient resource utilization, productive investment, and strong communities. Rooted in the traditional concept of "high road" as an ethically superior choice over "low road" ways, this application to economic development represents a vision of a better social economy.

# PROSPECTIVE HIGH ROAD FELLOWSHIP PLACEMENTS AND PROJECTS

## **1199 SEIU**

2421 Main St. Suite 100 Buffalo, NY 14214 | <https://www.1199seiu.org/>

**About:** With over 450,000 members throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, and Washington, DC, 1199SEIU is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in the nation. Since our founding in 1932, our mission has been to stand up for quality healthcare, good jobs and social justice for all.

### **Project: “Building Power by Developing Member Leaders”**

This project will expose the fellow to all day to day union operations on the nursing home team. The fellow will be working with each of the organizers on the team to learn and process grievance handling (and arbitration prep if applicable), contract negotiations, developing and implementing a strategic escalation campaign, training and developing member leaders, political endorsement and campaign work, communications (internal and external), and strategic corporate research, all through an organizing lens with a goal of building power amongst the membership. By end of summer, the fellow will be proficient in basic union organizing and representation skills, will have ensured the success of at least two contract negotiation campaigns, and will have contributed directly to the economic well-being of low-wage healthcare workers across WNY.

## **African American Cultural Center**

350 Masten Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209 | <https://www.aaccbuffalo.org/>

**About:** Established in 1958, the African American Cultural Center is dedicated to promoting and preserving the history, art, and culture of the African Diaspora.

### **Project: “The AACC Enrichment Program”**

The fellow will produce a Program Impact & Equity Report that includes data analysis, community feedback, and recommendations. It will be delivered as a written report with visual summaries and a brief presentation. The project will strengthen AACC’s culturally centered youth and community programs by improving academic and social-emotional outcomes, expanding arts and heritage programming, and increasing community engagement. It also aims to build organizational capacity through evaluation, outreach, and program design. The project will expand access to culturally affirming programs, address disparities faced by disadvantaged youth, and strengthen AACC’s capacity to deliver impactful services. This work supports a more equitable Buffalo by uplifting community voice and improving outcomes in historically underserved neighborhoods.

## **Back to Basics Outreach Ministries, Inc.**

1001 East Delavan Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14215 | <https://www.backtobasicsministries.org/>

**About:** Back to Basics establishes peace in our communities by responding to people who are vulnerable, creating hope, and empowering change. We seek a community free of violence, poverty, and racial injustice where everyone has an opportunity for health, wealth, and happiness.

### **Project: “East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project”**

The fellow's final work product will include a plan and set of procedures for gathering and aggregating resident data for the residents of census tract 166, which will be gathered through the door-to-door canvassing, surveying, and organizing efforts of a team of community navigators that will be employed by Back to Basics. This project is part of a pilot program of the East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project (Census Tract 166). This multi-dimensional Project is to create a resident-centered plan and wide array of services (including housing repair, new affordable housing, job training and employment assistance, improved healthcare access, youth development, literacy services, commercial re-development, and green space restoration) to transform an under-developed neighborhood in East Buffalo.

By having an accurate and complete data set, this program will be able to assemble assets, services, and future funding to gradually help the residents of census tract 166 to transform their neighborhood into a healthy and welcoming place to live, work and thrive. If we can empower the residents to transform their neighborhood, we will have built a model that can be replicated across the East Side and the rest of Buffalo and beyond.

## **BRRAlliance, Inc. (Black Rock Riverside Alliance)**

52 Amherst Street, Buffalo, NY 14207 | <https://brralliance.org/>

**About:** Our mission is to improve the quality of life for those living and working in the Black Rock, Riverside, Grant/Amherst and West Hertel neighborhoods in the City of Buffalo by fostering environmental stewardship and stimulating economic development.

### **Project: “Summer Project Volunteer Coordinator”**

This project entails working inside our diverse community on creating two urban orchards in neighborhoods with food insecurities and engaging the community in the planning and beginning planting of a 400 tree educational arboretum that will line the waterfront. The goal is twofold: to get community input on the project and to educate on the importance of trees for a healthier community. The Fellows final work product will be recruiting and retaining active community volunteers on this project and production of community education materials. Bringing different perspectives to the table to formulate the planting plan and working side by side improving the environment for the health of the community will contribute to a more equitable Buffalo. Preferred skills: Ability to use a volunteer database management program, create and maintain spreadsheets and photograph working groups to journal progress at work sites is important. Good business communication skills are a must as well as social media skills.

## **Buffalo AKG Art Museum**

1285 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222 | <https://buffaloakg.org/>

**About:** Our vision is to flourish as an exceptional hub of artistic and creative energies that enriches and transforms people's lives in our community, our nation, and the world.

### **Project: "Research on Peer Museums and Traveling Exhibitions"**

We have two research projects that we would like to ask a High Road Fellow to work with us on. One involves collecting and analyzing a wide variety of data related to peer museums around the United States. The second involves collecting data related to traveling exhibitions organized by and on view at museums around the world.

Final work product(s) 1. A report that outlines the 10 US museums that are most closely aligned with the AKG in collection scope, governance, budget, and market size/demographics. The report will contain a wide variety of data related to these 10 museums. 2. A report that outlines (1) which museums in the US and around the world are organizing traveling exhibitions that might be a fit for the AKG's exhibitions program based on size, budget, and relevance to our audiences and (2) which museums in the US and around the world are showing exhibitions organized by other museums similar to the traveling exhibitions the AKG is organizing. We want the AKG to be a place where everyone in Buffalo feels welcome.

## **Center for Elder Law and Justice, Inc.**

438 Main St. Ste. 1200 Buffalo, NY 14202 | <https://www.elderjusticenyny.org/>

**About:** Our mission is to improve the quality of life for older, disabled, and low-income adults through the provision of free legal services, primarily in Western New York. Our goal is to use the legal system to ensure that our clients may live independently and with dignity.

### **Project: "Advocating for Older Adults to Age with Independence and Dignity"**

The Fellow will support CELJ's Policy Unit in identifying and advancing solutions to systemic issues faced by older adults by monitoring federal and state legislation, tracking proposed bills affecting older adults, and synthesizing emerging policy trends. The Fellow will help draft an end-of-session policy summary and develop an accessible informational bulletin for the public.

This project blends research, communication, and advocacy, offering the Fellow the chance to translate complex policy issues into plain-language materials for older adults, caregivers, and community advocates. Through direct engagement with CELJ attorneys, policy staff, and partners, the Fellow will see how local and state advocacy connect to the lived experiences of older adults in Western New York. The final products will be available online and in print, distributed to partners, senior centers, and community stakeholders. By translating legislation into practical, easy-to-understand summaries, the Fellow will help bridge the gap between government action and community awareness.

Older adults have the constitutional right to age with independence and dignity in the least restrictive setting of their choosing. However, their ability to do so depends on interconnected systems—housing, health care, long-term care access, financial stability, and protection from exploitation. Equity for older adults means ensuring that those facing systemic barriers—such as language access, disability, or poverty—can make informed choices and advocate for their rights. This project will amplify the voices of seniors and caregivers in Buffalo's most under-resourced neighborhoods, advancing CELJ's mission to build a just, age-friendly community for all.

## Center for Self Advocacy

1021 Broadway, Buffalo, NY 14212 | [https://www.center4sa.org/about\\_us](https://www.center4sa.org/about_us)

**About:** We help people with developmental disabilities work, advocate within their community, and have an independent and productive lifestyle.

### **Project: “Self Advocacy in Action, Outreach, etc.”**

This summer we would like to continue working with an intern from the High Road to expose that person to the world of self advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Additionally, this person will assist in other community advocacy related activities. Some examples of this include the area Disability Pride celebration, assisting at the Self Advocacy regional conference, outreach to local legislators on disability access, and assisting CSA in its monthly episode of Self Advocacy in Action (TV show). The fellow will help develop new materials for existing programs and update materials on advocacy skills. Our goal for this internship is to engage people around the area of disability rights and to have them learn through doing about the specific issues and challenges of disability access, legislative and community outreach. We also would like our candidate to get a better understanding of the Self Advocacy movement. *People with disabilities and/or knowledge of disability history are highly encouraged to apply. People who are bilingual are also highly encouraged to apply.*

## Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo (CFGB)

726 Exchange Street, Suite 525, Buffalo, NY, 14210 | <https://www.cfqb.org/>

**About:** For more than a century, the CFGB has enhanced and encouraged long-term philanthropy in the Western New York community. A 501 (c)(3) organization, the Community Foundation’s mission is: Connecting people, ideas and resources to improve lives in Western New York. Established in 1919, the Community Foundation has made the most of the generosity of individuals, families, foundations and organizations who entrust charitable assets to the Community Foundation’s care.

### **Project: “Racial Equity Roundtable Report Update and Analysis”**

The Community Foundation manages the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, which released “The Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo’s Great Opportunity” report in 2016 and is on track to release a community impact report as an updated companion report in 2027. The research and foundation for this report will occur in 2026. The High Road Fellow will help with research for the report which includes interviewing Roundtable members, partner organizations and institutions. The goal is to have a DRAFT report by December 2026. The work is part of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, which launched its work with the original data report in 2016. The report is “The Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo’s Great Opportunity”. Please see <https://racialequitybuffalo.org/> Summation of input from research for the development of impact stories. The report is intended to create a shared understanding of racial equity in Buffalo and the benefits of closing socio-economic gaps. Preferred skills/interests: someone who is interested in racial equity and culturally competent, amenable to working with others, and having some research experience.

## East Side Stewards

980 Northampton St, S 2401, Buffalo, NY 14211 | <https://www.eastsidestewards.com/>

**About:** East Side Stewards is a community organization transforming Buffalo’s East Side into a thriving, sustainable community by revitalizing green space, redeveloping unbuilt lots into community assets, facilitating green workforce development, and equitably redistributing resources. East Side Stewards aims to restore the environmental and social health of an area that has long faced systemic disinvestment and ecological degradation through centering environmental justice, stewardship, and community empowerment.



**Project: “Reimagining Buffalo’s East Side Through Land Stewardship and Equitable Neighborhood Redevelopment”**

We envision the fellow’s main deliverable being a digital Environmental Literacy and Land Stewardship Map that visualizes community assets, vacant lot conditions, and engagement patterns across the East Side. This interactive map will be accompanied by a concise written report that summarizes the findings, resident perspectives, and recommendations for future engagement. Both deliverables will support ESS and its partners in identifying opportunities for collaboration, investment, and public education. This project is designed to explore how residents, youth, and local organizations interact with land, environmental learning, and neighborhood revitalization in communities deeply affected by vacancy and disinvestment. The High Road Fellow will join East Side Stewards (ESS) in their work to activate green spaces and strengthen environmental literacy across the East Side of Buffalo. Working closely with staff and volunteers, the fellow will map existing and potential stewardship sites. Through surveys, interviews, and field research, the fellow will document how people care for the land, their understanding of sustainability, and how these practices connect to a larger story of community resilience.

**El Buen Amigo, Latin American Cultural Association**

114 Elmwood Ave, Buffalo, NY, 14201 | <https://www.facebook.com/elbuenamigolaca/>

**About:** Our mission is to act as a bridge between Buffalo and all of Latin America.

**Project: “Recidivism and What Works”**

The final product will be a research paper with a thorough analysis of the raw information collected from over 500 inmates incarcerated at the Orleans Correctional Facility and the recidivism rate in the span of 20 years. Over 15 data profiles were necessary to do the proper analysis and the interaction between each segment of this research, for examples: age, race, education, work, religion, relationship, city, county, crime, time in jail, age of incarceration, military service, etc. The fellow will analyze the information to better understand how different external and internal factors affect the rate of recidivism among male inmates and how we can decrease the rate of recidivism. The analysis can be used to better understand how different external factors contribute to the relatively high rate of recidivism among male inmates. Erie County has a general recidivism rate of 77%-80%. In order to mitigate crime and violence in Buffalo, we need to take an approach based on research and analysis. It is important to draw attention to this matter because communities in Buffalo will continue to struggle if such high recidivism rate persists. Many families struggle to cover the cost of diapers, with 1 in 2 parents reporting that they can’t afford enough diapers to keep their children clean and dry. Currently, Buffalo is ranked the third poorest city of its size in the United States, while close to 24% of residents in Niagara Falls live in poverty.

**Fillmore Forward**

780 Fillmore Ave. Buffalo, NY 14212 | <https://www.facebook.com/FillmoreForward/>

**About:** Our mission is to create a sense of place by improving quality of life, restoring economic vitality, increasing inclusiveness, health, and wealth in the Broadway-Fillmore and Martin Luther King communities through grassroots organizing and public-private partnerships. Our vision is to increase the vibrancy and quality of life in our community, making it an even more valued destination in Buffalo’s urban life.



**Project: “Assessment of Fillmore Ave. Business Districts (Planning Tool)”**

The Fellow will: 1. Inventory all businesses, vacant lots (candidates for infill), and vacant buildings along Fillmore Ave. from William to E. Delavan Aves. 2. Note the status of existing businesses by utilizing or creating a RUBRIC as to its appearance and condition. 3. Document each site on a map (could be Excel) for use by economic development personnel and Block Clubs. 4. Interview/Survey Block Club leaders and residents to see what type of businesses and services each community desires. 5. If time permits - Match existing building inventory with the desires of the community to identify properties and future use. Buffalo's East Side has been neglected for decades but recently, there has been an effort by the city and state to invest in the area. Sadly, there are very few redevelopment funds coming into the Fillmore Ave. Corridor – especially north of Broadway Ave due to better community advocacy in other business districts. Having an inventory of businesses, conditions of buildings, and vacant buildings would help block clubs advocate for missing businesses and services in their community (fresh food markets, laundromats, neighborhood restaurants, etc. It would also give the Councilmembers information, so when a developer comes to speak with them, they can have a clear list of businesses that the neighborhood wants and would support. This way, the community has a voice and is prepared to advocate for how their neighborhood develops to make it more walkable and valuable to residents.

**Good Food Buffalo Coalition**

387 Massachusetts Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14213 | <https://goodfoodcities.org/portfolio/buffalo/>

**About:** The mission of the Good Food Buffalo Coalition is to encourage, enable, and support Western New York public institutions to adopt and implement the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP). We achieve this through community engagement, advocacy, collaboration, and education. In doing so, we center racial justice and transparency, build local economies and valued workforces, and foster community health and nutrition, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare, while holding ourselves accountable to those communities most impacted by racial injustice in the Western New York food system.

**Project: “Writing Community-Driven Action Plan”**

The High Road Fellow would be working with the Good Food Buffalo Coalition to write a draft action plan outlining how the Coalition should go about advocating for and supporting the implementation of Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) at Buffalo Public Schools. The GFPP has engaged over 300 people who are most impacted by food injustices in Buffalo and across Western New York to learn about their school food goals and priorities. During Spring 2026, we will analyze the results from these surveys and listening sessions and develop key takeaways and themes. The High Road Fellow would be responsible for working with us to distill these key takeaways and themes into action steps and recommendations, and then building all of these results out into a draft CAP action plan that outlines how the Coalition should advance GFPP efforts such that they center the school food goals and priorities of those most impacted by food injustice in our region. This plan will be presented to our communities using a town hall format, asking for feedback.

We would also ask the fellow to start tracking some school food procurement data for us to help us gather a baseline of Buffalo Public Schools' food procurement trends. The fellow's final work products would be the draft CAP action plan and a compilation of BPS procurement data in a Google folder. This work will help the Good Food Buffalo Coalition ensure that the public tax

dollars that our public institutions spend on food advance our communities' values rather than perpetuating food injustices.

## **Jericho Road Community Health Center**

184 Barton Street, Buffalo, NY 14213 | <https://jrchc.org/>

**About:** We care for our communities and advocate for systemic health equity in order to demonstrate the unconditional love of Jesus. Our vision is for individuals, families, and communities to become healthy and whole.

### **Project: “Research and Creative Support for Advocacy Department”**

The project can be tailored to the Fellow's interests and goals. In general, we need support in researching certain topics around our advocacy agenda. In conjunction with this research, we would love if this fellow is able to create social media posts/campaigns focusing on advocacy around those topics. Topics include: maternal health, Medicaid rate reimbursement for community health workers, and other issues concerning equity, poverty, and healthcare. Last year, our fellow developed a timeline and we would love to keep adding to/refining that timeline (on health equity, buffalo specific, debunks zero-sum thinking). To better understand the issues our patients and clients face, the fellow would also have the opportunity to shadow and interview certain staff members and patients. Final work products could be social media toolkits around certain issues, blog post(s), issue overviews, advocacy strategy plans, etc. The form will likely be written documents. We are certainly open to any ideas or skills the fellow has and can tailor their time with us to their goals and abilities. If the fellow is artistic—we would love them to create an advocacy installation that we would feature in our “advocacy space” in the future. In acting as a support for our advocacy department, the fellow will be directly contributing to JRCHC's efforts to break down barriers and seek equity for some of Buffalo's most vulnerable residents. We work to make our clinic, programs, and advocacy patient/client centered and lead (when possible, appropriate).

## **Justice For Migrant Families**

371 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo NY 14202 | <https://www.justiceformigrantfamilies.org/>

**About:** JFMF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that promotes justice for migrant families by providing support to individuals in the federal detention facility in Batavia, information and resources to families in the community, and advocacy both within and beyond the local community.

### **Project: “Migrant Accompaniment Fellowship”**

The fellow would participate in accompanying individuals and families to various activities around Buffalo including immigration court, ICE check ins, social services appointments, and DMV appointments. The Fellow meet folks who are recently released from incarceration by ICE at the Buffalo bus station and make sure they have what they need to get home safely. The Fellow may have the opportunity to work in our office supporting folks with pro se filings of immigration forms or organizing our written materials in various languages or possibly help with court-support, either accompanying folks to immigration court or setting folks up with a virtual immigration court connection to avoid detention by ICE in the Buffalo immigration court.

The fellow will have supported many folks navigating confusing and often intimidating bureaucratic processes, often made more challenging by language barriers and

unaccommodating officials. This work serves primarily undocumented people and people seeking asylum in the US, a group that is typically left out of funded services, including those offered by larger refugee serving agencies. This work is crucial to Buffalo becoming a more welcoming place for folks to arrive and to feel like they are held and supported in community, whether or not they have particular pieces of paper. Preferred skills: Familiarity communicating with Signal is a plus. We have a preference for fellows who speak English and at least one other language, but are quite open about that other language. Our small staff of 7 speaks 5 different languages.

### **King Urban Life Center, Inc.**

938 Genesee Street, Buffalo, NY 14211 | <https://www.kingurbanlifecenter.org/>

**About:** King Urban Life Center strengthens families and builds community resilience on Buffalo's East Side through evidence-based programs that meet families where they are. We serve low-to-moderate income individuals and families in one of the city's most historically underserved areas, providing early childhood development programming, community healing spaces, and pathways to long-term stability and success. Founded 34 years ago, we are committed to creating safe, connected communities where every child and family can thrive.

#### **Project: “Community Impact Assessment & Equity-Centered Strategic Planning”**

The Fellow will produce: A comprehensive Community Impact Report (20-30 pages). A literature review of best practices in trauma-informed community programming and early childhood development in urban settings. Data visualizations and presentation materials for board, funders, and community stakeholders. The final report will inform our strategic planning process and strengthen future grant applications and community advocacy efforts. The High Road Fellow will conduct a comprehensive community impact assessment and contribute to equity-centered strategic planning for King Urban Life Center's core programs. The Fellow will analyze program data, conduct community surveys, and research best practices in community-based child development and trauma-informed programming. The Fellow will analyze service gaps on Buffalo's East Side for children ages 0-5 and their families.

This project directly advances equity in Buffalo by centering East Side residents' experiences and needs in organizational decision-making, ensuring data collection practices honor community knowledge and lived experience. Analyzing how early childhood development programs and community healing spaces address the structural inequities that create achievement gaps and limit economic mobility for Buffalo's Black and Brown families. By strengthening King Urban Life Center's strategic capacity, this work ensures more effective service delivery to 200+ families monthly and models how nonprofits can center equity in every aspect of their operations.

### **Leadership Buffalo**

500 Seneca St., Suite 304 Buffalo, NY 14204 | <https://www.leadershipbuffalo.org/>

**About:** Leadership Buffalo's mission is to cultivate inclusive and adaptive leaders who strengthen connections that drive civic responsibility, professional development, and community impact across the Greater Buffalo region. Guided by this mission, our goals are to foster meaningful engagement among diverse leaders, inspire collaborative action to address community challenges, and equip participants with the knowledge and networks to lead with purpose. Through our vision of setting the table for civic transformation, we aim to build change-



driven, innovative, and socially conscious leaders who are committed to creating a more vibrant and equitable Buffalo.

**Project: “The Blueprint: Creating LB’s Impact Dashboard”**

The goal of this project is to design and implement an organizational scorecard that measures Leadership Buffalo’s performance and progress across its six strategic priorities: programmatic redevelopment, marketing strategy and brand identity, partnership and community development, member and alumni engagement, operational alignment, and fiscal stability. The fellow’s final work product will be a comprehensive organizational scorecard presented in both visual dashboard and written report formats. It will include defined metrics, baseline data, performance indicators, and recommendations for tracking progress across Leadership Buffalo’s six strategic priorities. This tool will establish clear metrics, align staff and board efforts, and track impact to ensure the organization remains focused, data-informed, and strategically positioned for sustainable growth.

This deliverable will serve as a practical tool for leadership and staff to monitor outcomes, guide decision-making, and communicate impact to stakeholders. By using the scorecard to track equitable engagement, representation, and access across all initiatives, Leadership Buffalo can better identify gaps, allocate resources more fairly, and elevate voices from underrepresented communities, ultimately fostering more inclusive leadership and civic participation across the region.

**Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo**

290 Main Street, Suite 150R, Buffalo, New York 14202 | <https://legalaidthbuffalo.org/>

**About:** The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc. was established in 1912, and our mission is to render legal assistance to those who are unable to procure it elsewhere, and to assist persons without means in the pursuit of civil remedies and legal rights, while cooperating with other agencies to ensure access to services.

**Project: “Immigration Advocacy Project”**

This Fellow will focus on immigration law and will be directly supervised by the Chief Attorney and a Managing Attorney of the Civil Legal Services practice. They will have the opportunity to work side by side with our immigration staff and other interns, handling naturalizations, adjustments of status, employment authorizations, and similar applications and/or petitions, including organizing and engaging in outreach and establishing clinics in the immigrant communities.

The intern will collect data identifying the local ethnic groups in need of assistance, and the type of assistance needed. This fellowship project advances equity in Buffalo by addressing systemic barriers faced by immigrant communities and promoting inclusive access to legal services. Through direct engagement, legal assistance, and data-driven outreach, the project ensures that individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds can secure lawful status, employment authorization, and citizenship, critical steps toward economic stability and civic participation. The exact form of the project will be at the option of the fellow in collaboration with LABB supervisors.

By organizing community clinics and creating multilingual resources, the fellow will reduce disparities in access to immigration support, foster trust between immigrant populations and local institutions, and empower families to thrive. The collection and analysis of data will inform targeted strategies, ensuring resources are allocated equitably and effectively. Ultimately, this strengthens Buffalo’s social fabric by promoting fairness, reducing vulnerability, and enabling immigrants to contribute fully to the city’s cultural and economic vitality. It aligns with equity goals by dismantling barriers, amplifying marginalized voices, and creating pathways for long-term inclusion and opportunity.

## **Partnership for the Public Good**

617 Main Street, Suite 300 Buffalo, NY 14203 | [www.ppgbuffalo.org](http://www.ppgbuffalo.org)

**About:** Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) is a community-based think tank that builds a more just, sustainable, and culturally vibrant Buffalo Niagara through action-oriented research, policy development, and citizen engagement. Since 2007, PPG and our partners have made lasting, positive changes in our community on issues ranging from economic development and education to health equity and police reform. PPG unites 350 partner organizations: a diverse array including nonprofit agencies, block clubs, labor unions, faith groups, environmental organizations, social justice advocacy groups, museums, and more.

### **Project: “Media for the Public Good”**

With this project, we seek to capture and tell the stories of the people who lead critical community change. The 2026 Fellow will interview partners and work on video-based web and social media content. The High Road Fellow will work closely with Dejia James, our Advocacy Communications Lead, to co-host and co-produce two episodes of our bi-weekly radio show and video podcast. These shows will dive deeply into the stories of community leaders who have won policy changes or begun social change movements in recent years – What did they do that worked? What led them to advocacy? How did they recruit others to join their efforts? How have they utilized unconventional mediums and creativity to advance their objectives? What lessons can other public policy campaigns learn from their work? The High Road Fellow can also select 1-2 of our recent policy wins to create multimedia toolkits or “explainer” videos that educate our broad audience on what these policy changes will mean in practice. Preferred skills: Video and graphic editing experience, Capcut/Canva is wanted but also can be taught.

## **Rochester Regional Joint Board Workers United Upstate NY & VT**

2495 Main Street, Tri Main Building, Suite 556, Buffalo, NY 14214 | <https://workersunitedupstate.org/>

**About:** We believe that all workers deserve a union and all workers deserve a say on the job. As a labor union, we fight for justice both inside and outside the workplace. No shop is too small and no voice is too quiet to be heard. We will devote our time, energy, and resources necessary to educate, advocate, and support our members.

### **About: “Workers United Upstate NY Organizing Fellow”**

Our goal at Workers United Upstate NY & VT is to organize industrial unions. The Fellow will work with external organizers on various new organizing campaigns which may take the form of working with an external organizer on a union election vote, planning and helping with rallies, press conferences, and other events, and conducting strategic research for future campaigns. Some current examples of projects include: the Hyatt hotel boycott and continuing to organize and help Starbucks workers get their first contract. b.) The Fellow will likely work with organizing committees and/or bargaining committees. Their work might also intersect with the Western New York and Buffalo Labor Councils, and various other community allies. C.) The final work product will depend on what active campaigns we have going on in Buffalo during the summer. Past fellows have worked on the following campaigns: staffing the picket line at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Buffalo, strategic research for the Starbucks Workers United campaign and other targets for the union, helping the Lexington Co-Op workers win their first contract, holding Buffalo restaurant owners accountable for their union-busting actions. Fellows will be helping us advocate and fight for improving workers' lives.

## **Shared Mobility, Inc./ Reddy Bikeshare**

640 Ellicott Street #441 Buffalo, NY 14203 | <https://www.sharedmobility.org/>

**About** We believe that affordable, accessible, and equitable mobility is a Human right. We strive everyday to help build innovative shared transportation programs with local partners across the country that help uplift the communities they serve. We provide low cost and robust self-service access to bikes and e-bikes in WNY

### **Project “Bringing Low-Cost Bikeshare to Underserved Communities”**

Reddy Bikeshare got started in 2016, and in partnership with Independent Health and support from other partners, we're expanding our network to underserved communities in need of low-cost access to bikes and e-bikes. In addition to expanding our footprint of stations, we're trying to increase enrollment of discounted passes targeting these communities: East Side Forward Pass and Niagara Falls Resident Pass. The Fellow will help the communications team at engagement events, instruct how bikeshare works to community members, help with helmet giveaways and PSAs on social media. Our goal is to see double the bikeshare trips on Buffalo's east side of Buffalo and a doubling of East Side Forward member roll in 2025. The Niagara Falls program is much more mature, and we hope to see a 20% growth in that program. Preferred skills: Would be helpful if the person was familiar with video editing, graphic design and social media platforms. The basics of micro-mobility and public transportation would be helpful. It would be very helpful if they are savvy in communication, both at an in-person setting and electronically.

## **Urban Christian Ministries**

967 Jefferson Ave Buffalo NY 14204 | <https://ucmbuffalo.org/>

**About:** Urban Christian Ministries is committed to sharing and modeling the love of Christ in all we do, cultivating and nurturing generations of leaders. We envision a future where the purpose and potential of every young person is realized and celebrated by empowering and equipping them to actively exercise their faith as the foundation of participating in civic life and contributing to creating vibrant and healthy communities.

### **Project: “WE LEAD Impact Infrastructure Project”**

The WE LEAD Impact Infrastructure Project will build the foundational systems UCM needs to measure, communicate, and strengthen its impact on youth leadership, violence prevention, and community empowerment. The fellow will design and implement three core components: An Impact Dashboard: 1. A functional tracking system capturing youth participation, leadership milestones, civic engagement, skills development, and program outcomes. 2. A “Voice of Youth” Insight Report: qualitative research through interviews and focus groups that elevates youth perspectives on identity, barriers, violence, and opportunity. 3. A Community Partner & Donor Map: a clear database of congregations, nonprofits, funders, and community partners essential to UCM's expansion and sustainability. The goal is to create a repeatable, data-informed infrastructure that supports UCM's strategic plan: strengthening operations, elevating youth voice, expanding partnerships, and building long-term capacity to empower young leaders across Buffalo. This project: expands access to leadership pathways for youth disproportionately impacted by violence, poverty, and systemic inequities, amplifies community voice, especially youth from East Side neighborhoods whose lived experiences are often ignored in decision-making and supports long-term sustainability of a grassroots organization rooted in love, justice, and community empowerment. Preferred skills: Survey platforms (Google Forms or Monday Forms) for youth and partner insights. Light data visualization tools (such as Google Data Studio or Monday) can be used by



the fellow to enhance the dashboard. Strong research and analytical skills. Conducting interviews, focus groups, or qualitative research. Understanding or curiosity or openness about faith-based organizations and the unique role they play in community leadership.

## **West Side Community Services**

161 Vermont St, Buffalo, NY 14213 | <http://wscsbuffalo.org/>

**About:** West Side Community Services fosters the stability, security, and well-being of our vibrant and dynamic community by engaging, connecting, and supporting its residents.

### **Project: “Researching and Reimagining the Role of Community Centers in Buffalo and Beyond”**

We have three potential projects for our fellow depending how long it may take the fellow to complete. We are not suggesting that the fellow complete all three projects. The projects are listed in order of priority. PROJECT A: The fellow will produce a two-part report that will help WSCS make decisions about future programming/services. Part one of the report will detail how community centers in Buffalo and in communities of similar size/economics/demographics are serving their neighborhoods. This part will explore the similarities and differences in programs and services offered by Buffalo-based centers and centers in other similar cities, with an eye toward discovering creative approaches to holistic support AND gaps in services in Buffalo (especially the West Side). Part of this section may also include common challenges/barriers faced by other community centers and how they address them. Part two of the report will summarize responses from West Side community members regarding their service and program suggestions for WSCS. PROJECT B: Fellow will assess current internal communications at WSCS, then make recommendations for a more structured framework, including strategies and processes. We are in a period of rather rapid growth in terms of number of employees, so we want to make sure we support that growth with more strategic and intentional internal comms. PROJECT C: Fellow will review current volunteer program and create a more formal volunteer policy, training program, and onboarding process. Ultimately, this work will contribute to a more equitable Buffalo by leading WSCS to fill service gaps and develop programming/services desired by the immediate neighborhood.

## **Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO**

2421 Main St. Suite 120, Buffalo, NY 14214 | <https://wnyalf.org/>

**About:** The Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO's mission is to improve the lives of and increase the power for working families, bring fairness and dignity to the workplace and secure social equity. We are working to build a strong, diverse, free and democratic labor movement in order to give a political voice to workers in our area. We fight for a public policy agenda at all levels of government which benefits all working families, both union and non-union. We are active in our community and strive to create a broad progressive coalition for social and economic justice.

### **Project: “Moving the Movement Forward: Federated Work within the AFL-CIO”**

The WNY Area Labor Federation is a consensus-based organization fighting for the rights and needs of 140 affiliated local unions, which includes more than 145,000 union members and retirees across the WNY region. With this project, our fellow will have the opportunity to learn the role of local Labor organizing within the federated structure of the AFL-CIO. This will include engaging in educational and issue-based campaigns from the national AFL-CIO and NYS AFL-

CIO; mass communications with union leadership and membership; local, state and federal political campaigns; event planning; developing programs for our Central Labor Councils; and community-based mutual aid across urban, rural, and suburban populations. More specifically, the fellow will research and produce an educational presentation for union leaders and membership on an issue of timely personal, economic, or political significance as it relates to increasing the power of the working-class. Preferred: Access to a personal vehicle is highly recommended.

## **WNY Law Center, Project 1**

37 Franklin Street, 2nd floor Buffalo, NY 14202 | [www.wnylc.net](http://www.wnylc.net)

**About:** The WNY Law Center is a nonprofit legal services organization of legal professionals representing low-income people in a full range of civil matters. We engage in direct representation of homeowners facing foreclosure as well as advocacy and education in fair lending, consumer debt issues, preserving housing, and passing on generational wealth. The mission of the Western New York Law Center is to ensure that all members of our community receive the full range of civil legal services including "non-traditional" legal assistance like policy advocacy and legal education. Our mission is to promote human and civil rights guided by an overarching commitment to racial and economic justice.

### **Project: "Tangled Title Issues in the East Side of Buffalo and Parts of Cheektowaga"**

WNYLC's work on vacant and abandoned properties noted a trend of heirs' property concentrations in the same neighborhoods that were historically redlined. A significant amount of our clients who need help with inheritance issues come from East Buffalo and Cheektowaga, which share a border. We would like to gain a better understanding of the scope and extent of the problem. "Scope" here means that we want to understand what types of heirship issues our communities have. "Extent" is referring to quantity.

This proposal was inspired in part by an heirship project undertaken in Jacksonville, Florida by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). John Sabora, Housing Resiliency Program Officer for LISC, said "this is a quiet issue in the community where people are losing title to their homes." To determine scope and extent of the heirship issue, we would use the metrics that the Florida project used and the tools Building Blocks provides us, such as age of last recorded deed, code violations, lis pendens filings--indicators of potential heirship issues.

The final work product would be a written report with data on properties in Buffalo and Erie County. We would use this report to guide our work in this area as well as proposed solutions to the problems found. This research would benefit the Law Center's Generational Wealth Project. This project seeks to keep home ownership in families by providing legal services with estate planning and probate issues. In low to moderate income families, a house is the largest asset and oftentimes the only source of generational wealth. A study of properties in Buffalo and Erie County could help us shed light on the scope of tangled title issues and assist us in finding solutions for this including proposed legislation. Preferred (but not required): Building Blocks software that we would provide access to.

## **WNY Law Center, Project 2**

37 Franklin Street, 2nd floor Buffalo, NY 14202 | [www.wnyc.net](http://www.wnyc.net)

**About:** The WNY Law Center is a nonprofit legal services organization of legal professionals representing low-income people in a full range of civil matters. We engage in direct representation of homeowners facing foreclosure as well as advocacy and education in fair lending, consumer debt issues, preserving housing, and passing on generational wealth. The mission of the Western New York Law Center is to ensure that all members of our community receive the full range of civil legal services including "non-traditional" legal assistance like policy advocacy and legal education.

### **Project: "Build a Foundation for Community Reinvestment Advocacy in Buffalo"**

The fellow would produce a preliminary workflow to guide participation in the Community Reinvestment review process for banks in the WNY region. Under the federal and New York State community reinvestment acts, federal and state regulators conduct periodic reviews of the community reinvestment activities of banks operating in the WNY region. Bank CRA review scores are considered in deciding whether to grant regulatory approval to things like branch openings and closings and mergers and acquisitions. Community voices are invited to participate in these review processes through meetings with the banks, submitting comment letters, and presenting testimony at hearings.

As a result of that participation it is possible to obtain reforms of bank practices and bank commitments to invest in underserved communities. A workflow would guide the Law Center's participation in these processes by establishing processes to efficiently identify the local financial institutions that are the subject of reviews and the schedule of their periodic reviews, collect relevant information to inform community comments, organize community advocacy to seek bank reforms and commitments, and prepare and present comments to regulators.

The Fellow will produce template documents, most importantly a template comment letter to regulators. If time allows the fellow could also review funding strategies pursued by community reinvestment coalitions in other regions throughout the country to inform the Law Center's consideration of potential funding sources for this work. The Law Center chairs the Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestment Coalition (BNCRC), a coalition of about a dozen community organizations whose purpose is to fight for economic and social justice by advocating for banking reform, community reinvestment, and fair and affordable housing. With the fellow's assistance it should be possible to sustainably maintain CRA advocacy in the WNY region to pursue similar commitments in the future which will contribute to a more equitable Buffalo.



# DEMOCRACY SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS

Democracy Summer is designed for ILR undergraduate students interested in enhancing democracy through public service. Democracy Summer provides insight on the issues and access to leaders who are addressing major challenges *through government*. It provides a strong grounding in critical thinking, group dynamics, and problem solving. Democracy Fellows are considered High Road Fellows but their individual projects are coordinated with a specific public official instead of a not-for-profit organization. These projects are not yet defined, but if you are open to a Democracy Summer placement, please indicate so on your application.

One example of a potential Democracy Summer project this summer is to work with a local elected official and coalition on the Frontline Arts Organizations Sustainability Fund. We anticipate being at the implementation phase of the Frontline Arts Organizations Sustainability Fund, which is a \$2.5M seed fund allocation in the City of Buffalo's federal stimulus funding package for frontline arts organizations and artists. Frontline Arts Buffalo (FAB) was closely involved in seeing that fund proposal through, and we are hoping to use this 3 year spend-down fund as a pilot towards showing the need for the city to invest significantly in the arts and cultural sector. The High Road Fellow will assist with developing evaluation methods and measures that we can use to track impact, and leverage grantmaking in storytelling for us to build momentum around the work.



This painting, titled "Regrowth" (acrylic on paper) was created by Lizzie Taber (High Road '21) for the High Road Showcase.

The engine represents Buffalo's position as a rust belt city and Lizzie's placement with Citizens for Regional Transit. The sky represents the growth and potential Buffalo has.

The 22 Native New York plants associated with spring and early summer represent the 22 High Road Fellows and healthy, sustainable growth.

